

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

Published Aug. 4, 1881. HENRY FETTERSON & CO., Publishers.
No. 215 Walnut St., Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1866.

Price 25.00 A Year, in Advance. Whole Number Issued, 2241.
Single Number 5 Cents.

DISILLUSION.

WRITTEN FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST,
BY AUGUST BELL.

The sun shone down, the fields were green,
I found a path to wander through
Whose grass and flowers still bore the dew,
And sudden twilight unfurled
Led me glad wanderer between
New trees, new banks, where violets grew
So sweet with the sole life they knew.

Only two hands to hold the flowers!
"O wait, my violet," I said,
"This fair path leads on far ahead,
And you would fade in all those hours
Wait here where rushes make green bowers,
In the cool shadow be your bed
Until you hear my homeward tread."

So my flowers waited, and I went
Along the path, beneath the trees
Where cool bright beams like misty rain
Through which small gleams of Heaven were
sent—
The birds sang loud in full content—
On and on with soul at ease,
I wandered as the path might please.

It led by little singing brooks,
Where mosses hung green, damp and fresh,
And tall white lilies seemed to hush
Your praise like vestals with pure looks—
It led through hidden valleys cool,
Where let no heedless footstep rush,
Lest they in wealth of sweet flowers crush.

It led me glades of laurel through,
It took me up a hillside steep,
Over rocks the channels loved to leap,
Heights where rare rhododendrons grew,
Great rose glories, which perfume
My memory yet, and breathing deep
Into dream-gardens of my sleep.

And yet I did not break one bough,
But let the path me onward take,
It led me by a blue, still lake,
Overhung by cliff and mountain brow
Where lone herons lay, wondering how
The clouds such changeable groups could make,
And if the sun shone for their sake.

Of all the flowers I gathered none,
For, not innocent, well I knew
How sweet my chosen violets grew
In the still shade beside the stone,
Awaiting me, my wanderings done,
All among wonder weeds which three
Little arms about my blossoms blue.

Only two hands for all the flowers,
And those my violets would fill,
So I turned homeward on the hill,
And passed the modest daisy bowers,
And the white lilies, and the towers
Of forest trees, now passed until
I reached those violets waiting still.

Small, small blue violets I small and low!
More common violets by a stone,
What gladder had my fancy shown
Over these pale flowers, than to lounge
Some rare, far-gone, that I knew
None I saw, none I saw,
And I can gather these alone.

They seemed not small but wondrous even,
My more's first blossoms bright with dew,
Waiting up at me where they grew
When first I checked my footstep true,
In woods and hills I went to seek
But now returned, to find low here,
My violets seem so small and few.

At well I like to see I gather up
The sweetest little blue I come
To carry with me to my home,
These violets blue will fill a cup
To grace the table when I sleep,
To love and keep them, and be dumb,
Thought of earth's glory I've moved dumb.

HEARTS ERRANT.

CHAPTER I.

MISS URSULA.

Miss Ursula Barker woke up one morning and found herself alone. It was a long time before her opening eyes, on the carpet of the bed, saw a letter under and under with black, and that letter informed her that she had become mistress of 25,000 a year.

She sat up, and took the letter in her hands, turning it about to look at the postmark, and indulging in those speculations as to the strange handwriting with which we are all wont to tug the pleasing excitement of some anticipated "event."

Miss Ursula's correspondence was by no means extensive, and a letter in an unknown handwriting called for a considerable amount of wonder and surprise, which she bestowed on it, as we have seen, after which Miss Ursula was moved by the good news. Very soon after it was, indeed, and so very soon, that it was not long before she was in the most widely unlooked-for of future good.

That it is no wonder it took her some moments even to comprehend it. The process of drawing herself was a long one that morning, for, as each phase and consequence of her new position came to her one by one, she was compelled to sit down and survey it.

"That he should have thought of me!" she exclaimed, putting in the act of drawing the comb through her soft, white curls—"me whom he has scarcely ever heard of—whom he has never even seen! It is so very, very strange!"

"My dear girl, my dear Ursula and Clara," was the next coming point. "I can give them a home now. I can have their young lives from future drudgery. How surprised they will be! How glad to have done with that weary teaching!" And a dower: "God has granted" signed up from some inexpressible depth, sealed more than the uttered words revealed.

"Bridget shall have that new gown of which I was obliged to cry for Clara's winter cloak. She was not disappointed, because I never promised it her, but it was rather a trial to me not to be able to give her a comfortable Christmas present, and she deserved it too."

Then Miss Ursula got out her best black silk dress, and put it on. It was not consistent with her new prosperity to don the shabby black merino which was her usual every day wear. At the last look her hands began to tremble, and she dropped into the nearest chair with the pious cry—

"Too late! too late!"

"I wonder how many of us, at the age of Miss Ursula, can lift the cup of success to our lips, and find it undebated by that bitter drop of regret. 'Too late!' Too late for the warm beams now cold and chilled in the grave, which would once have answered ours in throes of delight. Too late for the darling hopes which wasted only this for their fulfillment, and which, when, departing of fruition, for lack of which, which under the weight of that cruel 'too late,' seems to have lost all its vision."

It had been for many years the custom of Miss Ursula's faithful maid, Bridget, to deposit the letters from the morning post, when those happened to be any—and we have already said that Miss Ursula's correspondence was not extensive—upon her mistress's bed, just where she could see them on first awaking, and some how it had happened that all the great experiences of Miss Ursula's life had come to her in this way, so that in spite of their rare recurrence, there was always with her a certain vague expectation of feeling directed the first awakening glance to the spot where a letter might lie.

"What has the new postal day brought forth?" was always the first thought.

She never knew, therefore, it had brought forth a letter, sealed and signed with black ink, like this one, announcing the terrible news of the death of a certain lieutenant in the army who had been serving in India, patiently toiling, step by step, up the long list of hardships towards the goal which was to crown his career—his hope—his ambition—struck suddenly down by the fever of that far land, and as he had achieved the long looked-for result. Poor Miss Ursula did not rise from her bed that morning; she did not rise for many mornings after; she lay with her face to the wall, trying with a painful effort at submission to take up her life again, her dark life with the only ray of sunshine quenched out of it.

It was remarked after that that poor Miss Ursula gave up the struggle against the tragedy of this day, and that she had been used to the brown dress she had been used to be so careful of, that she wore her black dress of the simplest pattern, and abandoned all the little contrivances and adornments by which she had hitherto adorned her juvenility. Miss Ursula hitherto accepted her five-and-thirty years, and by degrees even responded to them as much of the form of a dreary, solitary life. She gave up her love for the life she yet for her to die.

Well, time went on, and one morning, about six years later, Miss Ursula opened her eyes upon another letter, a letter which caused her pulse to bound and her heart to beat, as she had never thought to feel them again after the dead calm into which, from the shock of that great sorrow, her being seemed to have sunk. We do not need to go back a good way into Miss Ursula's history to make this letter intelligible.

She was the daughter of an officer who, dying young, had left a widow and two little children to make the best they could out of a hard world and a small income. There had only the pension of a lieutenant's widow and the interest of 10,000, the widow's dower, and a little thing away to a quiet country village.

Ursula was the younger of the two children. Her father, a bright, impetuous, wild but warm man, was the mother's dear comfort and blessing—gentle, patient, and self-sacrificing. It was not difficult to her to "bear the yoke of her youth"—the yoke of poverty, of the repulsive desire, of unattained youthful ambitions.

But Godfrey was the widow's pride—Godfrey, whose proud impatience at his narrow circumstances of all kind, and whose words were carried away into a dreamland of comfort and splendor, honor and glory, thereafter to be achieved for them all by her noble and beautiful boy. She started and denied herself that his education might be, so he proudly said, "the education of a gentleman." And he, for his part, walked bravely backwards and forwards, in all sorts of

weather, the long four miles between his home and the large endowed grammar-school in the neighboring town, as which his mother's country means sufficed to make him a daily pupil only. I am afraid there was far more of selfishness than of affection in the boy's determination to conquer a hard world, and revenge himself for all the slight of fortune he felt so bitterly by winning himself a place and a name in it. The courage which carried him along the steep path leading to the goal he strove for was not fed by the sight of his mother's self-sacrificing devotion, or his sister's patient courage. He chafed and fretted over their unobtainable attire, over their scanty table, not because of their discomfort, but because their things, in his view, he hated and despised them.

He grew up to be a fine, gentlemanly, clever lad, and then his mother died for him what she could never have done for herself—she wrote to an uncle of her husband's, a wealthy man, who had hitherto ignored her existence, and asked for the benefit of his position and influence in launching her son into the world. She wrote of Godfrey with a pride which was manifest in every line of her letter; and this is what the rich man answered—

"I am quite inclined to do something for you, because you have behaved very well. You have asked me for nothing, and have kept out of my way. I met my face again; your husband's marriage; I told him it was not madness on such a beggarly income as his; and I had already enough of poor relations sitting me up, without his bringing a fresh importation of them upon me. However, he chose to disregard my advice and my wishes and I washed my hands of him. But you, madam, have agreeably disappointed me; you have shown a very proper spirit, and have never looked to your relations for your support. I looked a sun-pound now; get the lad a decent outfit of clothes, and send him up to me. I want to look at him. Of course it would be absurd to depend upon your account of your own boy. If I had found a country boy of a fellow, I shall send him back to you; but if he has had a decent training and looks like a gentleman, and is likely to do one credit, I can get him a berth in India, and ship him off to it as he likes, and make, take all I mean to do for you."

"India" for "years?" The widow's cheeks blanched at the word. Her boy! her only one! She hardly wished the lad made no application to Sir Walter. It was too late now. Godfrey, who had read over her shoulder, stood before her with his eyes fixed and flushed cheeks. She glanced at him, and she knew that she must use him—for ever in this world, her heart whispered—for the sake how those years of privation and anxiety had laid upon her.

And Godfrey went, and the mother and daughter were left alone, to live at the expectation of his letters, and to pray every day for the speedy good fortune which would reimburse them all.

Ursula was at that time a devoted little maiden of fourteen, very grave and sensible for her years (Godfrey was her year older). She grew up a tall, straight, bonnie lass, with candid blue eyes, and a fair, honest face, and pretty wavy brown hair; and when she was eighteen, the romance of her young life began. There was a school-fellow of her brother's, one Edgar (thereafter the only one whom, in consequence of a harsh rebuke on the subject of his own poverty, Godfrey had introduced to the society of an acquaintance home. Edgar, a straight, tall, straight, bonnie lass, with candid blue eyes, and a fair, honest face, and pretty wavy brown hair; and when she was eighteen, the romance of her young life began. There was a school-fellow of her brother's, one Edgar (thereafter the only one whom, in consequence of a harsh rebuke on the subject of his own poverty, Godfrey had introduced to the society of an acquaintance home. 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[October 27, 1944]

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payment. It will be well for the new journal if its income is as extraordinary as its title.

☞ A man by the name of Farrot, offers, with a new machine which he has invented, which is moved by steam and exploded with gun, to kill all the men of dirty thousand men every twelve hours. [That fellow's an agent of the "Universal Peace Society"—whether he knows it or not.—Ed. Post.]

His lips moved in reply, but no sound came from them; but she understood from the motion of his arm that he wished to be alone; so she went out trembling, and closed the door softly behind her; but went no farther than the other end of the passage, and then stood listening to

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